

# Back to reality

## Theory says people can make choices

by Nancy Jones

- A stressful job causes ulcers.
- Another person can make you angry, depressed or happy.

These are popular misconceptions, according to Dr. William Glasser, psychiatrist and author of books about "Reality Therapy."

Dr. Glasser's philosophy of behavior contends that each of us chooses how we think, what we feel and what we do. Because we make these choices, we are responsible for what we think, feel and do. All human behavior is motivated by forces within the person and all behavior attempts to satisfy five human needs: belonging, power (or achievement), fun, freedom (or independence) and physical (food, shelter, security).

Robert E. Wubbolding, Ed. D., working

on Glasser's theory, takes the process one step further. Once the behavior and motivators have been identified, Wubbolding helps people determine goals and plans for reaching those goals.

Conventional therapy and counseling has permitted people to excuse their behavior by citing past history, early childhood experiences or external stimulus, according to Wubbolding. He is director of the Center for Reality Therapy/Midwest and a professor of counseling at Xavier University. Reality Therapy is a method of helping people take better control of their lives, he explained.

People can identify and clarify what they want and need and then evaluate if what they want is realistic and attainable. Wubbolding tells his clients that he engages in "talk-and-do counseling." He warns them: "We'll talk, but you've got to do."

Life is complicated and emotional, Wub-

bolding said. For instance, a death occurs in the family. "We are eager to say 'The death caused me to be upset,'" Wubbolding said. "Grief is necessary and normal, but it is people who allow themselves to be upset."

Wubbolding commended former First Lady Betty Ford for her advice to actress Ann Jillian, following Jillian's double mastectomy. Said Ford, who also underwent breast surgery: "It's OK to cry—but not too long."

Reality Therapy helps people examine their own behaviors and to evaluate them with clear criteria. Next, a positive plan is designed so the person can begin to take control of his or her own life and to fulfill his realistic wants and needs. The result, according to Wubbolding, is development of personal strength, more self-confidence and better human relations. People can change and live more effective lives. —

# Managers use reality to aid workers

While the Reality Therapy method can work for anybody in any relationship, Robert Wubbolding, Ed. D., finds it a perfect way for supervisors to help their workers.

When employees pay attention to what they do and think, rather than what they feel, Wubbolding says they learn to accept responsibility for their actions. As a result, employee behavior and performance improve.

Wubbolding conducts Reality Management workshops for business and industry which attract managers, supervisors, counselors, teachers and clergy. His eight-step process is a no-nonsense and practical method for talking to employees. Its aim is to build "personal strength and responsibility" so people "can function in a way that is helpful," he said.

The eight steps are:

**1. Maintain an ongoing relationship with employees.**

A supervisor must be more than friendly and cordial. There is more to Step 1 than

small talk. The manager helps employees define what they want from the job, from the company, from fellow employees, from supervisors and from themselves.

The manager also tells the employee what is expected of him or her. Most people are good at that, Wubbolding said, but they need to combine job expectations with an understanding of the employee's needs.

**2. Ask the employee to describe effective or ineffective actions.**

For example, if Joe says he can't get along with Tom, ask him to cite an incident and provide details. Don't ask *why* he can't cooperate with Tom. Remain non-judgmental. Lecturing and judging tends to create only momentary compliance or determined resistance.

**3. Ask the employee to evaluate behavior.**

Ask if what the employee is doing in Step 2 is helping. It is important that the manager asks—rather than tell. Criteria for this value judgment include the job to be done, the effect on other people and the helpfulness

in getting what the employee wants. The "Reality Manager" develops effective questioning skills: "Does coming late help get the job done?" "What effect does arguing in front of the customers have on other employees?" It is acceptable to express opinions about employee behavior, but Wubbolding stressed the importance of allowing employees to make their own judgments about the behavior and its effect on the job.

**4. Make a positive plan to improve.**

The manager helps the employee construct a plan. The plan will be successful if it is specific, attainable and measurable. Wubbolding said. The plan should answer the questions such as "when?", "where?" and "how often?" There is no room for "maybe," "possibly," or "I'll try." The plan cannot be dependent on other people or events.

**5. Get a commitment to follow the plan.**

It can be a handshake or a written plan on paper. Schedule a conference to check on follow-through.